

Guidelines
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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Office of Legislative Counsel

OLC 78-2457
27 June 1978

Mr. G. Robert Blakey
Chief Counsel and Director
Select Committee on Assassinations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Blakey:

Since recent discussions with you and Messrs. Cornwell and Goldsmith, I have been conducting an intensive review of existing procedures to see how we can accommodate things to your expressed wishes for special arrangements. This is in addition to arrangements to accelerate responses to the general run of requests. I have discovered that some of the things I thought I could work out are not practical, simply because they will be more disruptive of an orderly and ongoing research in your behalf.

As you know, some 40 percent of all research time in the Directorate of Operations is devoted to some 5 percent of the requests. Many of the requests for names come with marginal and sometimes no identifying information; when this occurs it causes a delay in processing while action is taken to clarify matters. A very large share of the names simply do not appear in the 201 files, which means that the relatively quick 201 check is frequently profitless. This necessitates the dispersed manual search about which you have been informed. As a result it seems impractical to try to carry out a mass short-cut, with the detailed meticulous search becoming unavoidable.

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Following your request I did ask that 201s be reported promptly, with related research continuing. This is being arranged. Subsequently, Mr. Goldsmith requested that oral requests for 201 checks, only, be accepted for immediate action. When I explored this, planning a procedure for converting the oral request into writing (for later confirmation by you) it developed that even this apparently simple action is not so quick. In those cases where there is a 201 file it must still be reviewed by the responsible substantive organization. This takes time, insofar as the requested immediate check is concerned. In addition, my inquiry developed the fact that if these ad hoc special requests are accepted, as though they are authenticated priority requests, they would interrupt other research being conducted in your behalf. In essence, this approach to attempting to expedite matters would prove, instead, to be counter-productive. Our approach has been to request through Ms. Hess--your control point for this activity--that priorities be assigned to requests.

The whole question of priorities seems to me to be essential to the successful organization of the balance of your investigation. A symptom of the problem, from our vantage point, can be pointed up by observing that the larger portion of the materials made available for review by your staff remains untouched. Some of this was collected on a crash basis in response to what were presented as urgent requirements. As you presumably are aware, we have found no records on a significant proportion of the separate items about which you have inquired. This negative finding may spare your researchers the time otherwise required to review the material, but it nevertheless consumed research time in the Agency.

The above summary gives only the highlights of the totality of my inquiry on this general subject. Suffice it to say that it is my conclusion that it is better to adhere to the established procedure of levying requests through my office; we will accept oral requests subject to your confirmation, but in the absence of an assignment of a specific priority

by you these requests will have to take their turn. I do not know what action can be taken by you to review the unread materials that have been made available, but we are now beginning to see the early results of a new general priority within the Agency; given the problem of reviewing by your staff it may be that this will only add a different frustration to your planning.

I have your draft proposal on procedures for handling certain special materials. It has been submitted to the Office of the General Counsel for review. As I am sure you are aware there are certain problems in your proposal, and I hope that the current working arrangement will meet your immediate needs while we address the issues raised by your proposal. I hope that we will be able to resolve the general run of problems within the existing agreements. For the time being we will continue to proceed on this basis while we review your draft proposal.

Very truly yours,

/s/
S.D. Breckinridge
Principal Coordinator

SDB:hfs

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